DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

THE EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

An HMI enquiry in eight LEAs

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Introduction

1. In recent years the nature, work and placing of the educational welfare service (EWS) within local authorities have been a matter of debate. The Seebohm Report[1] saw the main functions of the EWS as part of the personal social services. The later Ralphs Report[2] acknowledged an increasing involvement in some kinds of social work by educational welfare officers (EWOs) but believed that this work should be carried out within an education setting.

2. During the same period a number of influential education reports, particularly the Plowden[3] and Newsom[4] Reports, raised the question of social work and pupils and schools. The Plowden Report, anticipating the recommendations of the Seebohm Report, also suggested that there is "a strong case for the broader integration of the personal social services." Newsom made little reference to the EWS but looked to "teachers whose training had included some realistic sociological studies" to carry out home visiting and to liaise with medical, welfare and child services. Both reports saw a need for trained social workers closely related to pupils and schools. By and large, Newsom envisaged these people as being trained teachers whereas Plowden suggested that this need might be filled by EWOs after a two-year training period, similar to that required for the Certificate of Social Work and working within something akin to the Seebohm Report's unified social work service.

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[1] *Local authority and allied personal social services.* Report of the Committee July 1968 Cmnd 3703

[2] *The role and training of education welfare officers.* (Report of Local Government Training Board Working Party 1971)

[3] *Children and their primary schools.* Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England) 1967

[4] *Half our future.* Report of Central Advisory Council for Education (England) 1963.

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3. Reorganisation of local government services in 1974 led to a few authorities integrating their EWS within the Social Services Department following Seebohm but the great majority retained the EWS within education, though many accepted the enhanced social work role and functions for the service outlined in the Ralphs Report. In recent years the EWS has increased numerically and extended its professional concerns, at the same time as there has been a marked development of teacher involvement in home-school liaison and in arrangements for pastoral care of pupils. It is important, therefore, to clarify what the EWS is doing, what expectations LEAs, schools and EWS have of the service. In an attempt to assist in such a clarification HMI examined the service in eight LEAs and drew together the views of education officers, heads, teachers and EWOs about the present arrangement and the future needs and developments of the EWS.

Nature of the survey

4. In the course of visiting the eight authorities 12 HMI met more than 120 EWOs; they worked with 46 of these for at least half a day and in all but a few instances for a day or more. HMI visited 53 primary schools, 51 secondary and three special schools, meeting heads, teachers and school secretaries. Additional visits were made to three units for disruptive pupils and one observation and assessment centre. Individual HMI attended case conferences in schools, in clinics and, in one instance, a unit attached to a hospital. Although predominantly descriptive and exploratory, the enquiry was concerned to reveal how far LEAs', schools' and EWOs' perceptions of the work agree and to give some pointers to the training needs of the service as a whole and of the individual EWOs within it.

5. The inspection was conducted in two parts between 1980 and 1982. Four authorities were visited in 1980; in 1982 another four were included and brief return visits were made to the original four. The eight LEAs visited included three county authorities, four metropolitan districts and a borough in Inner London and were distributed about the country. Each had distinctive characteristics, which influenced its view of its EWS and the way in which the service worked.

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These characteristics affected particularly the perceptions of the problems which bear upon the attendance of pupils such as transport, rural employment, inner city deprivation.

The work of the EWS

6. All EWOs in the eight LEAs were asked to identify the main tasks undertaken and to quantify these in percentage of time taken in their performance. In the case of one authority there was available additionally a research dissertation for a Master of Social Work degree submitted in 1979 by one of the EWOs. The response to HMI request was good numerically but the variations between EWOs in different LEAs and even, in certain instances, between individual EWOs working in the same LEA, were such as to make anything but very broad generalisations extremely tentative. Thus home or school visiting varied from as much as 70 per cent to as little as 30 per cent, though there seemed general agreement around the 50 to 60 per cent mark. Some of the other tasks, for example those related to child employment or escort duties, had greater uniformity at or about three per cent of an EWO's time on either of these.

7. At present the greater part of the EWO's work arises directly out of the non-attendance of a pupil at school. Child employment, necessitous clothing grants, free meals and other such duties which are initiated separately from matters of non-attendance still take up a very small proportion of an EWO's time according to the estimates of the EWOs in the survey. Often, however, non-attendance is a starting point, which leads into matters which are more deep-rooted and which may require a range of skills and resources if difficulties are to be overcome and attendance at school improved.

8. EWOs' job descriptions may include a diverse set of discrete functions such as the reception of ethnic minority pupils into the school system, monitoring child employment, liaison with the Home Tuition Service, youth work with Asian girls, group work with persistent non-attenders or disruptive pupils, compilation of social reports, liaison with Social

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Services, with Probation Service and with Schools' Psychological and Guidance Service. In this range of responsibilities officers appeared to regard themselves as a school's or a parent's first point of contact for help: 'the only social workers constantly in touch with families and the community.' To function efficiently and to be able to call on the total resources of the community care agencies, the EWS requires a range of contacts and alliances which include teachers, the Child Guidance Service, probation officers, police, voluntary agencies, youth services and, of course, social workers employed by the Social Services Departments.

Home and school visiting

9. A substantial part of the survey was spent accompanying EWOs as they carried out their routine visits to homes, schools and other places of work. For the fieldworker these visits are the source from which the work is drawn. The starting point, in most cases, is a visit to a school to find out which pupils the school wishes to refer, or to check the registers and determine which of the absentees need to be subjects of further enquiry. Home visits arise from three principal concerns: the unexplained absence of a child from school (by far the majority of cases), the attempt by a school to enlist parental support in dealing with a problem affecting a child's progress at school, and to assess need for some welfare provision such as free meals or payment of grant in those authorities which use the EWS for these purposes. In a number of cases the concerns interlock. Where a child is thought to require, or is receiving, education in a special school the EWS may be involved in quite different ways.

10. The survey revealed a wide range of situations and problems met with on these visits and gave insights into the skills and qualities which an adequate response demands. In some cases where the enquiry was related to attendance it was met with a simple reason, usually medical, being given. The EWO noted the reason but urged the parent to get the child to school or provide medical evidence if the child remained unable to attend. In dealing with these situations the EWO depends very heavily on previous knowledge of the family and upon the fullness of the briefing from the school. On one such visit the EWO

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arranged to pick the boy up the next morning and escort him to school. His decision in this case was based on his previous dealings with the family, his belief that a positive intervention might influence an attendance pattern which was becoming worrying and his success with another boy where this 'pick up and deliver' service had led to the boy attending school regularly. Given the circumstances of the case this seemed a reasonable way of dealing with this problem.

11. HMI worked with a small number of EWOs in any one LEA, and the selection of these was a matter for the LEAs' officers to decide, so the sample may or may not have been representative. In all but a few instances the home visits were handled by EWOs with a combination of professional assurance, common sense and sensitivity which made the visit effective. A very good example of the way in which a mixture of skilled interviewing and counselling resulted in the identification of a major problem arose during a visit to the home of a girl of 15 who had had prolonged absence from school. Initially the girl appeared hostile to school but later in the interview told the EWO that she was pregnant and asked if he would return for further discussion about her future. He undertook to attach her to a school-girl mothers' group run by the EWS and to arrange home-tuition for her. Clearly much depends upon the individual qualities which the EWO brings to the job and alertness to signals the officer receives in the course of the work but the way the EWO perceives the role and function of the service can also affect the work. Thus in a city authority one officer questioned any young person she met in the course of her visits who was out of school while another officer concentrated so singly on the individual enquiry that he did not question, even, other children in the house at the time and, in HMI's view, failed to follow up what appeared to be a possible nest of truancy.

12. Home and school visiting are the core of the work of the EWO. It has to be borne in mind that this can be time-consuming. Inevitably some of these visits resulted in a no-reponse; on any given day this could be as high as 50 per cent of the homes visited. In these cases EWO usually left a note to say a call had been made and that another call would be made, perhaps even naming a day. A visit may well occasion a second,

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third or even more visits and, where it is found difficult to contact parents, an evening or weekend visit can become necessary. A particular problem occurs where the EWO and the family do not share the same language or the same cultural assumptions: for example, Asian women may be reluctant to open the door to a stranger, particularly if the EWO happens to be a male. In these circumstances EWOs tried to make contact but often could not be certain of being understood.

EWOs and social work

13. In the course of the work EWOs run into situations which call for social work skills and expertise and sometimes, through the child, become the agent in whom the family has greatest confidence. The case of the school-girl mother is a case in point. An even clearer example arose where an EWO visited a home to arrange, as part of his escort duties, for a girl to return home from a residential special school. It became obvious that the family circumstances made it impossible for the child to return to her family and the EWO had to find a place of care. It is dealing with these sorts of cases that the EWS becomes most extended because it has not been developed to undertake intensive social work at a time of crisis. The implications of this for the service need to be more fully understood. The Ralphs Report analysed returns from EWOs and estimated that some 70 per cent of EWOs' time is devoted to work of a social nature and this figure was accepted in a report on a survey of the EWS conducted by the Society of Education Officers in 1980. Much depends upon the base on which such quantification is arrived at and how work of a social nature is defined, but it does seem that some EWOs must necessarily become involved in some social work functions. There were many cases in the survey which called for some social work-related skills and where some element in the training which recognises this aspect of the work would be useful.

EWOs relationship with other professional workers with children

14. Certain cases involve the EWO in a relationship with other professions. In the course of the inspection EWOs not only worked with teachers but with social workers, psychiatrists, nurses and doctors. In these cases the EWO was often the person who knew most about the background of the child and the family, had often had contact with the child and family for longer

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than anyone else and had been responsible for initiating the case but, on occasions, was placed in a subsidiary role. Generally the EWO handled these situations well but much depended on the strength of personality of the EWO concerned. In the long run it is the individual officer's command and confidence which will determine the effectiveness of his or her contribution, and this can be enhanced by in-service training, but there is no doubt that the view others have of the service can be a very powerful influence both negatively and postively.

EWOs and schools

15. There are important aspects of the work of EWOs which bear directly upon the work of schools. Schools where EWO and staff have grown used to discussing pupils were more inclined to use the service more constructively in dealing with the problems of pupils. In one school the EWO discussed with the headteacher a boy for whom he had obtained cycling shoes. The boy had been troublesome and had had some problems at home. The EWO had got the boy interested in time-trialling and his attitude had improved. In a number of other schools it was obvious, from the discussions between the EWO and the school staff, that the EWO was regarded as having an important role in effecting improvement in behaviour as well as attendance. There were home visits where the EWO raised the matter of pupil behaviour in a helpful but quite firm way and which the parent recognised to be a proper issue for discussion.

16. Good professional and working relationships have been established between EWOs and schools in many instances. In almost all, the working relationships are good and in some schools the EWO is included in the discussion and planning of many of the school's activities. EWOs because of these experiences have come to a better understanding of developments within schools although at times there may be expectations here which the EWO may find it difficult to meet. In two instances during visits an EWO had to deal directly with questions about the curriculum; in both the EWO felt a need to give an answer when the appropriate response would have been to direct the enquiry to the school. There were other instances where the EWO's visit revealed a clear failure of communication between home and school. An EWO

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may be affecting the quality of the service offered. Individual EWOs frequently claimed that relationships at field worker level are generally good. There were some good examples of interchange of information between EWOs and social workers. These occur usually where the services share the same premises or where the EWO makes a point of calling in the local SSD office. But EWOs also believe that there are difficulties at administrative level. Chief education officers and CEWOs on the other hand feel that much has been done by way of inter-agency discussions, case conferences and other means to improve liaison arrangements, though liaison is still a matter for concern.

21. It may be that at the root of these problems lies a conflict of view about the place of the EWS within the total personal services provision of the authority and especially of the recruitment and training for the EWS. EWOs are, for the main part, convinced that the Ralphs direction is the way the service must develop, though some of the older officers have serious reservations about their own future within such a service. They feel that even if there were more generous provision for secondment for training this would not be a substantial answer for them. They see that the work does require social work skills but believe these are best learned on the job and good part-time local training provision is the only adequate answer to their needs.

EWOs support services and supervision arrangements

22. Support services to the EWS were in all but one authority very meagre. Basic clerical help, where it was provided at all, was limited. The average EWO, even when a member of a team, works as an individual responsible for all filing and clerical aspects of the work. Generally the level of recording reflects this limited support; officers do what they can under the circumstances but, without a clear supervision requirement, case recording tends to be nominal. In none of the services visited was the system of supervision of cases adequately developed. The fact that the EWO generally works closely with teachers in the school, reporting and discussing findings on a particular case, adds an element of consultation and sharing of perspectives but this is variable and uncertain and cannot replace the professional

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supervision needed. If authorities are to derive maximum benefit from their EWS, with greater attention to the diagnosis and analysis of attendance and related problems they will need to ensure that there is a system of thorough and sensitive recording of cases by EWOs which is adequately monitored and that there are procedures for guiding and directing the work of individual officers.

The 8 education welfare services

23. All the eight EWSs differed in organisation in important ways and several were being restructured at the time of the inspection visits. Table 1 (overleaf) allows some comparisons between the organisation of the services provided by the eight education authorities:

EWS links with LEA total administration

24. In the authorities visited the day to day running of the service is the responsibility of the principal/chief EWO. Authorities B and D emphasise the social work nature of the service and have designated their officers as Education Social Workers but, in common with the other authorities, these officers link with the administrative structure of the authority through the Assistant Education Officer (schools). This accountability of the service to officers administering the schools of the authority reflects the unanimity of view expressed by administrators, EWOs and teachers that the service is an education service working closely with schools.

25. During the period of the survey from 1980-82 two authorities (B and G) gave close attention to the question whether the service should be administered by the education service or a part of the personal social services. In both instances the enquiring body has favoured the EWS remaining with education. In 1980 the CEWO in authority B was appointed to the combined post of CEWO and AEO (pre-school and social education); however, when HMI revisited the authority in 1982 it was in the process of appointing a Principal Social Worker to direct the service and presumably here the whole question of the relationship of the EWS to education or SSD could become once more an open matter.

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Table 1

Organisation of EWSs

Authority	Pupil pop.	Establishment Notional	In post[1]	Admin. head	Average Pupil (P.S.) EWO ratio[2]	Structure
A	45,000	31	25 (27)	AEO (schools)	1:1800 (1:1452)	Principal EWO 6 Senior EWO 24 EWO
B	184,000	98	76 (101)	AEO (pre school and social edn.)	1:2420 (1:1873)	Principal social worker 3 Assistant principal social workers 6 Area education social workers 11 ESW level 3 55 ESW level 1/2.
C	83,650	23	23 (21)	PAEO (schools)	1:3638	PEWO 3 SEWO 19 EWO.
D	76,000	35	28 (30)	AEO (schools social edn.)	1:2714 (1:2171)	PESW 2 Ass. PESW 3 SESW 8 ESW level 3 21 ESW level 1/2.
E	126,000	60	58	SAEO	1:2172 (2100)	PEWO 5 AEWO 10 team leaders 11 SEWO 33 EWO
F	84,000	31	31	PAEO (schools)	1:2710	PEWO 6 SEWO 24 EWO level 1/2.
G	83,700	36	36	Dep. Dir. Edn.	1:2325	CEWO 3 DEWO 3 SEWO 29 EWO level 1/2.
H	29,200	53	49	DEO Division AEO (special services)	1:595	Divisional EWO. Dep. DEWO 3 Ass. DEWO 8 SEWO 36 EWO Snr. children's officer Courts officer.

[1]Generally the figures given are those for 1982, but those in brackets in the entries for authorities ABCD are for 1980

[2]The average pupil/EWO ratio has been calculated using the number of EWOs in post. The figures in brackets are based on the notional establishments and are the figures usually quoted by the LEAs concerned. Individual EWOs calculate the numbers of their assigned pupils by totalling all the pupils in the schools which they serve. This can give wide variations within many authorities with some EWOs having twice as many assigned pupils as others where an attempt has been made to give greater EWS coverage in areas of greater need.

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EWS working structures

26. In all the authorities visited the EWOs work as members of either area or divisional teams. In most an attempt has been made to rationalise the EWS areas with other services provided by the authority, particularly social service department areas, to facilitate liaison. The EWS links with schools, however, are the over-riding consideration in determining its working structure; liaison arrangements become of secondary importance. There are geographical and other factors which influence the decisions of how the EWO is to operate locally. Many authorities visited tend to favour an EWO being attached to one or two secondary schools and their feeder primary schools, often spoken of as a pyramid structure. Such a structure assumes well defined catchment areas and is less appropriate to inner-urban areas where schools are frequently more closely sited and where there are more denominational schools, many of them in the same neighbourhood as LEA administered schools and where there is much mixing of school populations. Greater freedom given to parents to choose the schools they wish their children to attend has made these so-called 'pyramid' structures even less workable in areas where there are a number of schools, readily accessible, from which parents may choose.

27. All the authorities visited agreed that the highest incidence of the problems the EWS had to deal with was found in urban areas. The county LEAs point out that rural deprivation can be as miserable and depressing as urban deprivation, that rural areas have particular problems which affect school attendance and which place an additional demand upon the EWS such as school transport arrangements or child employment. This last is largely seasonal and in the three county authorities visited, all of them major centres of tourism, can assume significant proportions. Nevertheless each of the county authorities makes differential arrangements to allow lower pupil/officer ratios in areas of urban concentration. One of these authorities has, in the period separating the two visits, reorganised its EWS to meet the increased demand placed upon the service because of the growing urbanisation of the south eastern part of the county.

28. Table 1 illustrates fairly clearly the lower pupil/officer ratios which operate within those authorities

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serving largely urban communities. This is true even when actual ratios are compared despite the fact that it is in the predominantly urban authorities that the EWS has not been able to fill its establishment. In the three urban LEAs visited in 1980 the number of EWOs was lower (see Table 1) in 1982 when HMI revisited. The significance of this is greater than it appears because in 1980 two of the authorities were actively filling vacancies. In 1982 the unfilled posts were due largely to the 'freezing' of posts as part of the economies which the LEAs had had to undertake rather than from a reduction in the establishment. However in one authority where 20 posts had been lost from the service because of the non-replacement of officers who had left, a restructuring of the EWS was being undertaken which assumed that most of these posts were lost permanently.

29. Pupil ratios are in fact only a very rough guide to the actual workload of individual EWOs and vary considerably within one EWS. The LEAs recognise that certain schools, because of the communities they serve, need more help than others. Normally the EWO has some 60-100 cases which have required a file to be opened; of these about 30 may be active at any one time.

Conditions of service

30. The career structure and conditions of service for EWOs vary from authority to authority. In 1980 Local Government Circular No. 297[1] offered guidelines to authorities on conditions of service for social workers and out-lined three levels of responsibility with three different levels of salary and it suggested that the EWOs could be given parity of treatment with Social Services Department social workers in the authority. Two of the LEAs visited in 1980 had accepted the recommendations for all EWOs, the other two accepted the recommendations for those who held the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW). By 1982 all the authorities visited except one, which has its own salary structures, accepted the salary levels suggested in Circular 297 but have applied these differently. One pays EWOs on level 1, reserving level

[1]National Joint Council for Local Authorities. Administrative, professional, technical and clerical services, scheme of conditions of service.

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2 for SEWOs and level 3 for team leaders. Others use level 1 as an induction grade, moving officers on to level 2 after an initial period of training on the job. Others use all three levels and build higher grades on to these.

31. What emerges is a diverse set of conditions of service. Officers' salaries vary considerably though the nature of the work and the level of responsibility of EWOs appeared to be much the same in all services. Two only of the eight LEAs are currently using all three levels of posts for EWOs, using senior officer grades of the administrative professional and technical scales for promoted posts in the structure. A third was considering doing so. Circular 297 had in mind a qualified social work force with the allied need for supervision of field work officers, and full supervisory functions were thought appropriate only to those above level 3. Only three or possibly four of the authorities at this time have placed their EWS in any position to achieve this and supervision of field worker cases does not feature significantly in any of the LEAs visited.

Recruitment of EWOs — a qualified service

32. This diversity in salary scales and career opportunities within the EWS in the eight LEAs is matched in the policies for recruitment to the service. Seven of the authorities have appointed officers who hold the CQSW qualification and CEOs and CEWOs have spoken, with differing degrees of enthusiasm, of aiming towards a 'fully qualified' service. One city authority had in 1980 declared an intention of recruiting only those who held the CQSW but when revisited in 1982 it had moved away from this position. A second authority whose CEO and PEWO are strongly committed to a service staffed wholly by those holding a CQSW qualification stated that they could not enforce such a demand on entry. Interestingly, when this LEA was revisited in 1982 permission had just been granted for it to fill a number of its 'frozen' posts and among the applicants for these there were six with CQSW. The other LEA have taken the view that they would hope to recruit those who have the CQSW or have the potential of gaining such a qualification. In other words, CQSW is seen as a measure or standard of professional and academic ability. Advertisements and job descriptions for posts in the EWS generally conform

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with these views though the appointments actually made, in some instances, show how difficult this entry requirement can be to work in practice. The exceptions among the LEAs visited are a city authority which has not recruited any CQSW qualified staff and whose senior officers do not consider the qualifications appropriate to the service, and one authority which while recruiting those with CQSW states a preference for those with teaching qualifications.

Table 2 *Qualification of EWOs*

Authority	No of EWOs in post	No of EWOs with CQSW	No of EWOs currently seconded	EWOs with graduate qualifications	EWOs with teacher qualifications	EWOs with nursing qualifications
A	27	5	4	3	2	0
B	76	14	0	11	7	0
C	23	6	1	4	1	0
D	28	11	2	4	3	2
E	58	0	LEA makes no secondments	3	2	0
F	31	8	No applicants	3	2	0
G	36	2	1	1	1	1
H	49	9	2	11	18	5

33. Table 2 gives an indication of the more common qualifications considered relevant in the appointment of EWOs in the eight authorities visited.[1] There are in addition a number of officers in many of the authorities who have advanced diplomas or other certificates, many of these the result of courses in, for example, social administration or public administration which may be as relevant or more relevant to the work than those listed in the table. Without having detailed information about the nature of the particular courses it is impossible to make firm judgments of this kind. The table does not list those holding a Certificate of Education Welfare (CEW), not because its relevance is doubted but because it is a qualification which ceased to be awarded in 1976. Table 2 is intended to illustrate the kind of qualification which the service is able to attract. It is, for example, significant that the service is attracting some who are qualified to teach in schools. Teacher qualification in the table relates solely to those holding a certificate or diploma in education; many of the graduates are also qualified to teach by reason of the time at which they took their degree and, in some instances, have taught in schools.

[1]Some officers hold more than one of these qualifications.

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34. It is important also to make clear that the table is a snapshot of a small part of the service at a particular time. One of the benefits of the two-phase nature of the inspection is that, in the case of four of the LEAs, two such pictures were taken at an interval of 18 months and certain comparisons can be made. In the four LEAs visited in 1980, 43 (23.5 per cent) of the total of 183 EWOs then employed held the CQSW. This compared with 11.2 per cent of the 3,207 EWOs in England and Wales who were so qualified as recorded in a survey conducted by the Society of Education Officers in the same year. A similar survey conducted in 1971 had shown an estimated 1.5 per cent only of the 2,310 EWOs at that time held the CQSW.

Secondment for training

35. Each of the four LEAs visited in 1980 had a policy for seconding officers for CQSW training and 10 EWOs were actually seconded for training. At that time it appeared that given a continuation of the existing rates of secondment three of the four authorities would more than achieve the projected target set by the Birch Report (1976)[1] of 50 per cent of the EWOs having a social work qualification in the mid-80s; and the fourth would be within striking distance of that target. However, the generic nature of CQSW training and the attractions of other forms of social work made it difficult to forecast how many trained EWOs might move out of the EWS into other forms of social work, especially in view of the better career prospects offered elsewhere.

36. Return visits in 1982 to the original four authorities revealed that the position had materially altered. The number of officers in post had dropped dramatically in the large city authority and in two others establishments had been reduced or not filled. Whereas in 1980 there had been 183 EWOs, in 1982 there were only 154. Of the 154, 36 (23.4 per cent) were CQSW qualified, suggesting that the qualified had retained their position as a proportion of the whole force but had not managed to improve it. As CQSW qualified officers might be expected to be in the younger or middle age group rather than the older

[1] *Manpower and training for the social services.* Report of Working Party on Manpower and Training for the Social Services set up by the Department of Health and Social Security (1976 paragraph 4.29)

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groups from which retirements had occurred and as three of the four authorities had continued to second for training at the same rate, it could be inferred that such officers were being lost to other services.

37. In the four LEAs first visited in 1982 only 19 of the total of 174 EWOs employed were CQSW qualified and one, the largest of the four and the second largest in number of officers employed of all eight authorities, had no CQSW trained officers among its 60 EWOs. The position therefore in 1982 was that in the eight authorities there were 326 EWOs, 55 of whom held a CQSW certificate or 16.9 per cent of the work force and only one authority, given the continuation of existing trends, was likely to achieve the Birch target of 50 per cent of its EWOs being CQSW trained. With one important exception this picture reflected the economic circumstances affecting authorities rather than any major change of perception by the LEAs of what is needed for the service.

38. The evidence gathered from the eight authorities makes it clear that the popular picture of a force largely recruited from police or services personnel, if ever true, no longer holds good. The fact that some LEAs are now inhibited from employing former public service employees is unlikely to have materially affected this issue. The services visited, in all but one instance, expect to recruit from a wide field: graduates, qualified teachers, residential care officers, probation officers, nurses and experienced social workers form a substantial proportion of those recently recruited. Of these, between a quarter and a third are women. It needs to be said that many of the ex-police and servicemen in the EWS in the areas visited often held senior responsibilities in their previous posts, many involving skills both of a social work kind and of management.

The LEAs' views of the work of the EWS

39. Fewer than half the LEAs visited have a policy document that describes the EWS, its organisation and its tasks. Consquently, in most cases LEA policy with regard to the EWS has to be gleaned from a number of

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different sources including discussions with chief education officers (CEOs) and their senior staff, committee reports, council minutes, job specifications and advertisements. At times it is difficult to distinguish actual policy from desired aims or even wishful thinking. Nonetheless there is a large degree of common ground among all eight LEAs about the need for an EWS, for it to be firmly within the education service and that, however described, the work of the EWS necessarily involves EWOs in certain kinds of social work.

The role of the EWS in securing school attendance

40. Chief education officers are unanimous in asserting that the need for and the subsequent work of the EWS derive directly from the duties and obligations placed upon parents and LEAs by the 1944 Education Act. In particular they refer to the requirement upon parents to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive full-time education, and that upon the LEA to make suitable educational provision for such children. Consequently, chief education officers are in no doubt that the prime and central task of the EWS is to secure school attendance.

The welfare role — the ability to benefit from education

41. There is equally strong agreement that an emphasis upon enforcement to the exclusion of all else is neither effective nor does it satisfy the intentions of the Act. The Act itself in its provisions related to travel to school, school meals and welfare grants recognises that the parents' duty may bear unequally upon families in different circumstances. This concern with the welfare of children and thereby with the facilitatory functions of the EWS is variously expressed in the different LEAs but the terms used in the Ralphs Report are a fair summary of their views: "to ensure that children are able to benefit to the full from whatever educational opportunities are offered to them." In one of the LEAs the description of the role of the EWO states, "His aim is to ensure that children attend school in a receptive and fit state of mind so that they can benefit fully from the opportunities offered." While it is difficult to see how the EWO could 'ensure' these conditions the concerns with facilitating school attendance and with the welfare of the child are clear. The policy statement of another LEA describes the job in the following way: "The EWS identifies factors which prevent children obtaining the fullest benefit

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from their education and attempts appropriate remedial action." A third LEA sees the service's task as seeking to ensure that "every child receives full-time education suitable to his age, aptitude and ability and that there are available adequate welfare facilities such as clothing, school meals, transport, maintenance allowances, etc. to enable him to take advantage of the education being provided."

The range of duties of the EWO

42. The concern of the EWS with school attendance is an amalgam of enforcement, welfare to take account of material or economic impediments to school attendance, and a wider facilitating, enabling function intended to help some children overcome difficulties they may have and to encourage productive relationships between home and school. Two statements contained in one large city's *Handbook for EWOs*, when taken together express these elements in the amalgam comprehensively. The aim of the service is defined as being "to ensure that every child is able to benefit fully from the education provided by removing, wherever possible, obstacles which interfere with a child's regular attendance at school which may be fostered through timely advice and the provision of material benefits where appropriate." This is amplified to include "it (the EWS) ensures the early detection of social distress and the creation of a favourable relationship between home, school and the authority." The LEA lists a wide range of duties, not intended to be exhaustive, which are expected of EWOs: "the investigation of absence from school and the promotion of measures to ensure regular attendance, where necessary taking action in the courts against parents or on behalf of the child, the identification of those children whose ability to benefit from education is impaired because of social, emotional or educational problems. EWOs are to develop a supporting relationship with children, parents and teachers through which help can be given in solving or alleviating problems affecting the child. EWOs are expected to advise and assist parents with the placement of their children in school and, where necessary, interpret Education Committee policy with regard to transfer arrangements and the availability of school places. EWOs are required to carry out escort duties, to monitor child employment, advise and assist parents in applying for specific grants eg free meals,

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clothing and maintenance allowances. EWOs are also required to create and maintain effective links with all other agencies interested in social service, police, probation, NSPCC, housing, area health authority and DHSS and to attend or initiate case conferences in respect of non-accidental injury, schoolgirl pregnancies or other problems affecting the child which give cause for concern."

43. The statement of duties outlined in para 42, although related to a particular LEA, covers the main duties which came to identify the work of the EWO during the course of the inspection. They accord with those outlined in the Ralphs Report and are expressed in terms of processes which are generally thought of as social work processes. In one respect the EWOs' duties in this particular authority tend to be more onerous than in other authorities; this stems from the particular way in which the courts within the authority's area operate adjournment procedures under the care provision of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 to recall children with a poor attendance record at varying intervals with the aim of restoring regular attendance patterns. The EWS in this authority not only has no CQSW-trained officers, it recruits few with any high level of qualification.

A service for the disadvantaged

44. Many of the statements made by the LEAs tend to emphasise the problem-relieving or alleviating nature of the service and, taken together with references to welfare benefits and assistance, the EWS image is largely of a service working with the disadvantaged pupils although LEAs would deny that they see the service linked only to children in so-called 'problem' families. A pamphlet issued to parents and schools in one LEA makes clear that the EWS work is not to be thought of as being confined to identifying and assisting children in social distress but is rather "to be seen as helping to build close relationships between all parents and their school, to interpret one to another and to see that all parents are aware of all the material benefits to which they may be entitled." The pamphlet goes on: "Since going to school is the normal course for children, all parents should be able to feel that they can seek help from the school and EWS as of right without any sense of being singled out as inadequate, ineffective or anti-social." This is the clearest

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statement of the welfare and enabling elements in the concern for school attendance. It hints too at a fundamental dilemma for those who administer the service — is it a service which deals solely with the needs of the child or does it have to minister to the family?

45. CEOs have sought to protect the EWS from the more rigorous economies which have had to be accepted in most of their authority's services. The view expressed by one CEO that "the EWS is growing within a contracting service and will continue to do so because of the problems which society will present" is not strictly borne out by the evidence of what actually happened during the period of the survey. In no case did the service grow and in some there was contraction, in one quite severe contraction. It is probable that with declining rolls the pupil ratios are largely unaffected. What has happened is that there has been an expansion in the role of the service especially in relation to non-accidental injury, drug abuse and in particular glue sniffing, intermediate treatment and most generally in the services' involvement in dealing with disaffected and disruptive pupils. In most of the eight authorities the service is seen as having a central role in dealing with these problems. As one CEO said, "they (the EWOs) are no longer the excuse collectors of the past." EWOs are being encouraged to participate in initiatives which lead them into joint activities with other services.

Specialist designation of EWOs and work with ethnic minority families

46. The Ralphs Report assumed there would be specialist functions for which there would need to be specialist officers. Only two of the eight authorities have adopted specialist designation of officers and one of these attempts to limit specialist responsibilities to a two year duration during which time the EWOs continue to have some general duties. The LEAs with substantial concentrations of ethnic minority families have attempted deliberately to recruit officers from these communities with varying success. Only one service has achieved any marked success; one in three of its officers is black. Having recruited, none of the authorities would wish to employ these officers on solely ethnic minority matters. One LEA maintained that it was impossible to identify issues specific to ethnic minorities, with the possible exception of the

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education of Muslim girls. It is desirable that such officers should deal with the whole range of attendance-related problems but it is likely that they will have particular insights and guidance to offer to the service about such matters as racial prejudice and discrimination and more especially about the different lifestyles of different communities.

Enforcement procedures and welfare provision in the 8 LEAs

47. In their documentation all eight authorities supplement the requirement to ensure the regular attendance of children at school by a recognition that there is also need to ensure that the child is fit to benefit from such attendance. These two requirements lead in extreme cases to the enforcement of attendance through the courts and the provision of necessitous clothing allowances and maintenance grants. There is a range of other general duties which fall upon the EWS which call for enforcement powers or service provision: child employment certification and the related bye-laws, transport of children, escort duties and assessment for free meals. It is a superficially attractive notion to place these duties and responsibilities along a continuum between enforcement and service provision, creating a scale along which LEAs might be judged to incline towards either side of the mean. Such a scale could not be created for the authorities visited, nor does experience of the EWS engender any confidence in such a scale being applicable more generally, not least because the statistical evidence varies enormously from one year to another within the authorities themselves. In seven of the authorities visited the variation between court proceedings instituted within an authority year by year was as great as any variation between the authorities.

48. In an attempt to improve attendance one authority has used the adjournment procedure in the juvenile courts rather differently from its use in the other authorities (see paragraph 43). The authority believes that this has proved a more effective measure in dealing with non-attendance than was the use of supervision orders in the past. Special attention was given to this use of the adjournment procedures but

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this had necessarily to be limited given the time scale of the visit. It was by no means clear that the circumstances in which it is appropriate to institute proceedings of this kind are understood by EWOs, heads and teachers. The procedures take a considerable amount of EWOs' time, both in visiting and in clerical work, which raises the question of whether skilled casework at an earlier stage could prevent any or some of these cases from going into the expensive administrative machinery of the courts. There are instances of pupils' cases having been deferred on 30 to 40 occasions and how success is measured in these individual instances is difficult to gauge.

Child employment

49. Other statistical evidence offers no firmer guide to generalisation about authorities' practices. Thus while the number of instances of child employment known to the child employment section of the EWS in one large city authority increased over the years to 10,000 in 1979-80, another city authority issued permits to only 285 children over the age of 13. In one of the counties work permits for the employment of children of school age are estimated currently to be in the region of 5,000. In an urban authority in northern England the actual figure for such permits is 222. Such variation is attributable to the total number of children and the employment possibilities in the area and, in particular, employment which has traditionally attracted child labour. But it seems unlikely, even allowing for local differences, that there is actually this scale of difference in the number of pupils who are in some form of part-time employment.

Maintenance and other grants

50. One group of statistics, however, did seem to suggest that the variation may be attributable in part to a difference in policy between authorities. Three of the authorities make far greater amounts of money available for maintenance grants and necessitous clothing allowances. In 1979-80 one spent £52,239 on providing clothing and footwear for 5,134 children; it has also decided not to make cuts in this figure or in school meal provision. On the other hand a large city authority decided two years ago to end its school uniform fund and to budget £10,000 for its Hardship Fund; virtually the whole of the Hardship Fund last year was spent on providing school uniform. The

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variations in the amounts provided may reflect differences in the economic circumstances of the populations in the two authorities but, given that the population of the latter is four times the size of that of the other, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the variation also reflects differences in perceptions of need. There were a number of indications that material needs are growing. One of the authorities visited now has one in three of its children in receipt of free meals, another reports an increase of 37 per cent in the take-up of free meals in the past year. A secondary head teacher in another authority believes that a very large increase in sandwich meals brought by children to the school reflects the growth in unemployment in the area and possibly hides an increasing number who though entitled to free school meals have not claimed them.

The schools' view of the EWS

51. Schools favour regular and frequent visits from the EWO but above all they want immediate accessibility to the EWO. The need for an EWO to be personally assigned to a school is unquestioned by heads and teachers and aroused comment only when it was seen to be lacking. Thus there is concern expressed by some teachers that in-service training, secondments and other demands are leading to discontinuity in the EWO links with their schools, a concern which is shared by some EWOs. During the survey, particularly in 1982, the failure of some LEAs to fill vacant posts, and the refusal of officers to cover these vacancies, resulted in some schools getting only an emergency service. These schools were coping with their problems with the aid of senior or area EWOs who visited when they could, or when called, but the schools recognised the very limited service which operated and hoped for an early resolution of the difficulty.

Working arrangements with schools

52. In the authorities visited the area organisation of the service results in most EWOs having a district or 'patch' and working with the schools within the district. In most instances all schools within the patch are assigned to the EWO, though some LEAs assign duties related to special education provision to a senior EWO. Where the patch covers the whole catchment

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area of the school, as in most primary schools, the EWO deals with all the attendance and related issues which arise. In the case of secondary schools however the EWOs patch and the catchment area may not coincide and in these cases the EWO will refer individual cases to other EWOs to make the necessary home visits in their districts. Schools frequently complain of a loss of urgency resulting from these arrangements. One LEA visited, where the schools face a multiplicity of problems, has begun to appoint school-attached EWOs to certain of its secondary schools. These are located in the school and deal only with that school's attendance and welfare problems, visiting families wherever they live. Generally CEWOs and chief education officers have resisted such arrangements because they fear that the EWO will become an agent of the school, at the direction of the headteacher and others in the school and will become, in effect, an additional member of staff. They believe the EWO's knowledge of the community and its families, built up by working with secondary and primary school children and which is so important to the school, could be lost when the EWO serves only one school. They argue that the service needs to be school related, working with the schools but separate from the school, and that the EWO's effectiveness is diminished if too closely identified with a particular school. There is no doubt that many large secondary schools, especially where they have a number of pupils who are causing difficulties, prefer a school-attached officer though there is evidence that some of the teachers see the relevance of the arguments for distancing the EWO from the school.

53. Arrangements within the school are largely for the schools to decide. In 1973 the Ralphs Report suggested that in about half the schools the EWO will meet with members of staff other than the head or deputy. The evidence of visits to schools in the eight LEAs indicates that this picture may have changed substantially. In all secondary schools and in many primary schools visited the EWO meets with teachers who are heads of year, heads of house or have some designated responsibility for the welfare, attendance and behaviour of pupils. In addition to these formal meetings with designated staff a number of schools enable EWOs to meet class teachers and tutors less

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formally in the staff room. On such occasions discussion often leads to useful exchanges of information about children, including those who are not specifically referred but are giving some concern or have benefited from earlier action by the EWO. This flow of information strengthens the teachers' and the EWO's understanding of the problems and what each can be expected to achieve in dealing with them.

54. Most schools, though not all, prepare a note on the cases which they wish to refer to the EWO. At its simplest level this may be no more than an individual attendance slip showing the child's attendance in the previous two or three weeks. Often this is amplified, usually by an oral report, giving rather more information about the reasons for concern and other relevant information. However in some schools the EWO is presented with the class registers, in some cases by the school secretary, and left to determine which children need following up. EWOs can then spend a great deal of time finding information which the school has already gathered. There is need for the EWO to have access to registers and from time to time analyse registers, so that they may gain a fuller picture of the school's overall attendance but the efficient use of the service requires the school to filter its problems using its own knowledge of the child coupled with a clear understanding of what the EWO is able to do. What is apparent is that school attendance is generally a starting point for discussions which often lead to other purposes being served and irregular attendance being set in the context of the behavioural and work patterns of the children.

Teacher expectations of the EWS

55. Teachers tend to see the role of the EWO as pre-eminently concerned with children's attendance in school and their welfare function as a necessary extension to enable the EWO to remove obstacles in the way of attendance. They believe that it is this which places the EWOs firmly within the Education Service. Social services social workers are often not perceived in this way, but are regarded by schools as family case workers who, in dealing with problems affecting families, may view a child's non-attendance at school as of secondary importance and therefore may not share the same assumptions about the importance of formal education at the school. In most cases schools

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feel that they understand the role of the EWO whereas that of the social worker is less clear. This has created certain problems in some authorities where the EWS has emphasised its social work service function, especially where this has not been fully explained to schools. In one school serving an inner city area where there has been much housing clearance and development and where the teachers estimate that 160 of the 850 pupils on roll are causing concern, all the senior staff, with the exception of a head of house, disagreed with the view that most truancy was symptomatic of family stress. Rather, they saw less than half of the pupils falling within this category and thought that most cases of unjustified absence should be dealt with by an attendance officer, probably with police experience, supported by a vigorous and well-publicised use of legally enforced sanctions.

56. Most of the schools visited viewed problems arising from unjustified absence in a different way. In one voluntary school in the survey the diocesan authority has placed a social worker to work specifically with children and families in stress and the head and staff believe this work to be invaluable. Interestingly the social worker differentiated her role from that of the EWO on precisely the attendance function. Unfortunately there was no EWO currently appointed to the school because of a dispute over the 'freezing' of posts and it was not possible to have the combined discussion which might have illuminated this point further. It is, however, true that schools frequently appeared to want a more ready resort to court proceedings and heavier penalties. It is fair to say that many EWOs also felt this approach to be right. CEOs and CEWOs are less sure about the effectiveness of such measures and are conscious of the complexities which surround the use of these sanctions. The use of the courts is a matter which divides the schools and the EWS. As well as the question of the readiness or reluctance to enforce attendance through the courts there are related issues of the use of the school report and the role of the EWO in prosecutions for non-attendance. It is not that there is conflict so much as lack of certainty, which comes partly from the delays in getting prosecutions and partly from the belief by some schools that they get insufficient feed back on these cases.

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EWS and the disruptive pupil

57. A further area where relations betwen EWS and schools can be troubled is that concerning disruptive behaviour by pupils. Then the objectives of the school and the EWS can be in apparent opposition as the school, by suspending a pupil, creates a problem for the EWO who still has the duty of seeing that the pupil receives full-time education. Certain of the LEAs have tried to overcome some of the problems by giving the EWO a part to play in the suspension process. Schools, however, guard jealously their right to take quick and effective action in cases which threaten their internal order and some schools are therefore reluctant to involve the EWO, even on occasions going so far as failing to inform the EWO of the suspension.

58. The overall picture of school/EWO relations gained in these visits suggest that it would be wrong to end this section with these negative observations. In almost every school visited teachers spoke warmly of the EWO serving the school. Where teachers were critical of the EWS they quickly absolved the individual EWO. Working relationships were almost invariably good with, in many instances, the EWO being involved in many of the school's activities and regarded as a valuable friend of the school because of his or her influence with parents and others in the community.

Conclusion

59. The EWS is a service that gets its *raison d'etre* from the obligations and duties placed on parents and LEAs by the Education Acts. These obligations and duties have been imposed in order to protect the child's right to education by seeking to ensure the child's attendance at school in a fit state to benefit from education. This must determine the relationships of EWS to LEA, parents and schools.

60. Securing the attendance of children in schools is an important job in its own right. The EWS, however, varies in size, work and conditions of service between LEAs. Often the balance between its enforcement and enabling functions is unclear and, even where there is clarity about the tasks it is called upon to perform, opportunities to acquire suitable training and

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appropriate qualifications are often inadequate. Some recent trends within the EWS have emphasized these problems but they have been central to debates about the work and training of the EWS since the publication of the Ralphs Report.

61. There are some questions concerning the social work role of the EWO which require more discussion. If EWOs are inevitably drawn into social work tasks because of their concern with the school attendance of children where do they draw the line and bring in social workers who work with families? How is case work in these circumstances to be properly supervised and what are the most constructive working arrangements between social workers and EWOs? How should the EWO retain an involvement in a case where school attendance remains an issue but where the necessary family case work has been taken over by the social services department?

62. Given greater clarity about the concerns and the work of the EWS there are issues for consideration concerning the kind of officers it needs to recruit, the training needed and the qualifications which might be appropriate for these needs. Those responsible for training will need to address questions about the CQSW and the extent to which it can meet their requirement of training and qualification within the EWS, bearing in mind that the service has drawn, and will continue to need to draw on, recruits from different backgrounds. Much will depend upon any decisions made about the place within the service of those who have a mature and developed experience which is relevant to the work of the EWS. If such people are to continue to be recruited their training needs both at induction and in fitting them into the career structure of the service will have to be given much thought.

63. In the eight authorities visited, and among individual EWOs, schools and LEA officers within them, there are divergent views about the proper orientation of the service. But there is no doubt, from the evidence of this small enquiry, that in all these LEAs the EWS is regarded as an education based service which, to operate effectively needs to be within the control of the LEA. Agreement that the EWS is an

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education-based service whose tasks are clearly education related would give the service a secure and respected position. This would allow realistic discussion of, and decisions about, its future development and ways of building on present good practice in the contribution it makes to securing school attendance.

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